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*E-Mail: [Light.magazine@dial.pipex.com](mailto:Light.magazine@dial.pipex.com)*

*Editor: Colin Dryland*

*Technical Editor: Roy Hinkly*

*Correspondence Secretary: John Lowe*

*Publications Secretary: John Cordial*

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# Men of faith in times of change - Moses

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HUMAN LIFE IS subject to change and it has been like this from the beginning. Just as the calm and placid sea gives way sooner or later to the raging storm, the mighty waves and the wind, so it is with mortal man. From the hilltops of joy, happiness and contentment, sooner or later we are plunged into the valley of despair and distress, looking for someone or something to which we can cling in order to give us hope and consolation.

With this in mind, we must look beyond man's insecurity to the one and only eternal Creator of the universe and to His holy, inspired and infallible Word, the Bible, which God has magnified above His great and holy Name. God's Word can give us the hope of life, if we place our faith and trust in those precious promises of God which are found therein and which will be realised in God's own appointed time.

## WHAT IS FAITH?

The Apostle Paul tells us that *'faith is the substance of things hoped for.'* [Hebrews 11.1] Further, God tells us that *'without faith it is impossible to please him.'* [Hebrews 11.6] and therefore to have faith we must believe in the all-wise Creator who is the Almighty God. Now faith is the impelling force that produces works of righteousness. Real faith can only be shown with its companion, works. The Apostle James wrote *'faith without works is dead.'* [James 2.20] In times past, God's faithful servants have demonstrated their faith in God by living their lives in accordance with His commandments.

The great men of the past who did have faith in God and served Him faithfully,

are called 'Heroes of Faith' and their lives, like ours, were subject to change. God used these men of faith to help forward His purpose. Among those great men and surely one of the greatest was Moses.

### THE NEED FOR A MOSES

The children of Israel were in slavery in Egypt and many of them were born into it, grew up in and died in that condition and to them there was little change in the pattern of their lives until God raised up Moses. [the name means 'drawing out'] Moses was drawn out or rescued from the waters of the river Nile by Pharaoh's daughter, saved from death through divine providence and was brought up as an Egyptian in the palace of Pharaoh, experiencing a life of luxury in the king's court. In addition, as we read in the book of Acts he was trained '*in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.*' [Acts 7.22] But he was also trained by his nurse Jochebed, who was



*View of the Nile river bank from a boat in use today*

his natural mother, in the ways of God. Moses wanted for nothing - he had all that a person could wish for from a human point of view. However he spurned all this to become a man with a mission; a man of faith, looking to the fulfilment of God's promises and the redemption of His people from slavery in Egypt.

## A CHANGE OF LIFESTYLE

The children of Israel did not understand his mission and in a moment of anger he killed an Egyptian. As a result of this he became a marked man and had to flee from Egypt to escape the wrath of Pharaoh. [Exodus 2.11-15] He went from the luxury of Pharaoh's palace to a nomadic life in the land of Midian. This changed his way of life dramatically to an unsophisticated, quiet and simple existence as a shepherd, devoted to his sheep by day and by night, subject to the dangers of attack by wild beasts and roaming robbers. He became a stranger in a strange land. From the pleasures, the wealth and luxury of the Egyptian court, Moses now tended the flocks of Jethro, the priest of Midian.

So why did Moses give up his former life and why did he choose to follow a simple nomadic life tending sheep? The reason is given to us in that wonderful chapter on faith.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Hebrews:

**'By faith** Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season...for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.' [Hebrews 11.24-27]

Moses chose to be an Israelite and learned to place his trust in God, a great change from his former life enjoying the pleasures of the Egyptian court. At the age of 40 years Moses had the opportunity to become a great man in Egypt, but God in His wisdom, arranged events for the next 40 years to bring about an important change in the character of this man, so that afterwards he was described as the meekest man in all the earth. [Numbers 12.3]

Now while in his prime, at 40 years of age, he would have liked to have delivered his people, after another 40 years of solitude, living a simple life as a shepherd and being much older, his enthusiasm understandably waned and he felt unable to deliver God's people from Egyptian bondage. When the angel of the Lord appeared to him at the burning bush and told him to go back to Egypt, he said: *'Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth*



*the children of Israel out of Egypt?*' [Exodus 3.11] He tried hard to persuade the divine messenger that he was not suitable for this important mission, and besides, he could not speak fluently. In addition, he doubted his ability to persuade his own people that God had sent him to deliver them.

We see what a changed man he was now, feeling unable to do the task that God was asking him to do. It needed a number of miraculous signs to convince him otherwise. The sight of the burning bush, the voice of the angel and the special powers given to him by using his shepherd's staff (which became the rod of God), combined to convince Moses to return to Egypt as the deliverer and great leader of God's people, instead of remaining as a shepherd in the land of Midian. Even so, his lack of confidence as a spokesman caused God to be angry with him and Aaron his brother was selected to be the spokesman.

Moses was finally convinced by the demonstrations of divine power, and the reassuring words of the angel who said to him *'I will be with thy mouth, and with his (Aaron's) mouth. and will teach you what ye shall do.'* [Exodus 4.15]

### BACK TO THE KING'S COURT

Having convinced Israel that God had sent him to deliver them from bondage, Moses and Aaron confronted Pharaoh, to tell him that God had sent him with a special message: *'Let my people go.'* [Exodus 5.1] Israel were in slavery and they too were about to experience great changes. God's promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had to be fulfilled for God's kingdom to be set up in the land of promise. God had said to Abraham hundreds of years before:

*'...thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not their's, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.'* [Genesis 15.13,14]

Moses had lived in the court of Pharaoh for many years and knew how to gain the presence of the king - and how to obtain the favour of the courtiers. The divine assurance at the burning bush had now given him fresh confidence. Moses then demonstrated his faith in God by fearlessly confronting that

powerful king, who from a human standpoint had the power to put him to death at a moment's notice.

### MOSES THE MIRACLE WORKER

Wielding that shepherd's rod which he had formerly used to herd the sheep, he now used it to initiate those ten miraculous plagues, which almost brought Egypt to ruin - by the power of God. There was now no hesitation, for by faith Moses accepted all that God's angel said and went ahead to deliver Israel out of the bondage of Egypt.

As each plague was introduced by Moses with the rod, so he demonstrated the great power of God which had been entrusted to him. The Israelites would stop and listen to his words (and those of his spokesman Aaron), as well as Pharaoh's courtiers, with great astonishment. But, as the plagues progressed, Pharaoh's heart was hardened and finally, before the last plague, he threatened to take Moses life if he ever came into his presence again. [Exodus 10.28] But the faith of Moses was strong and his confidence in God was not shaken by the threats of that great king.

### THE PASSOVER FEAST

The time had now come for a major change in the lives of the children of Israel and to commemorate this great event, God instituted the passover feast. Israel had to demonstrate **their faith** by making the necessary preparations to keep the passover. Only in this way would they be saved from the last great plague. The passover feast would be celebrated with staff in hand and shoes on their feet in the early hours of the morning, ready for the call to leave Egypt and go to the promised land. God's angel instructed Moses concerning the ritual of the feast and this had to be passed on to millions of people without the aid of modern technology - what a task! If each man had a wife and two children, with 600,000 men, this would be in excess of two million people !

At midnight on the appointed day, the angel of God passed over all the land of Egypt and the firstborn of man and beast died - except where the blood of the slain lamb had marked the side frames and lintels of the doors. The preparations were hurriedly carried out in the homes of the Israelites and now

all hinged on **their faith in God**. The record in the book of Exodus tells us how the angel of death passed throughout the land of Egypt and a great cry went up '*for there was not a house where there was not one dead*' and the Egyptians said '*We be all dead men*' and they thrust Israel out in haste with many gifts. [Exodus 12.29-36]

Moses demonstrated his complete trust in God and led Israel out of Egypt into the desert. The record then tells us that God hardened Pharaoh's heart again, he changed his mind and decided to pursue the children of Israel. Again Moses showed his faith in God - a great miracle was performed and all the people passed through the Red Sea on dry ground. Israel witnessed the salvation of God and the Egyptians were all drowned as they tried to follow. The songs of victory sounded loud and long in praise to God for delivering them from Pharaoh and his army.

### IN THE WILDERNESS

Many times the faith of Israel waned as they took that arduous journey into the desert of Sinai, but not the faith of Moses, which remained strong. He now found himself at the head of a multitude of people who in the main, were uneducated and given to grumbling. Moses led them to Mount Sinai, the place God had chosen to make a covenant with them to constitute His people, the nation of Israel.

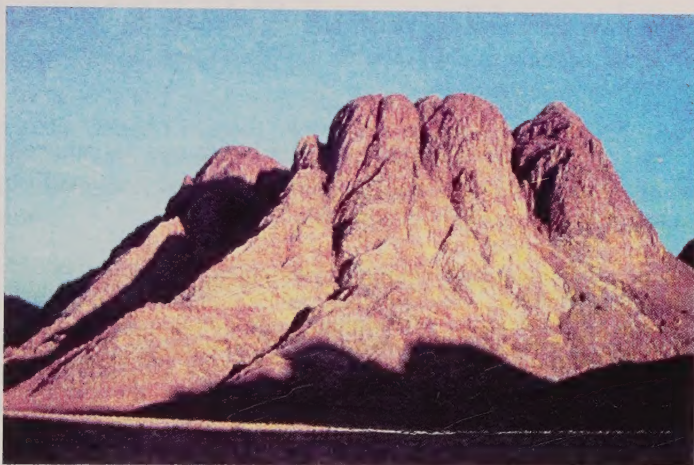
We read in the book of Exodus:

'Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation...' [Exodus 19.4-6]

The people replied:

'...All that the LORD hath spoken we will do...' [Exodus 19.8]





*Mount Sinai or Jebel Musa, the Arabic name*

However, the faith of many became dim and only by the impelling faith of Moses did the journey continue to the promised land. Many things happened to them during the forty years wandering and on occasions faithless Israel brought faithful Moses near to despair. Nevertheless his confidence in God remained strong time and time again, even to the extent of mediating on behalf of the rebels and pleading with the angel of God to spare Israel and show them mercy, even though they were faithless and perverse. On one occasion when Aaron and Miriam confronted Moses and challenged his authority they were told: *'My servant Moses...is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth...'* [Numbers 12.7,8]

However all God's faithful servants, with the exception of Jesus, failed at times and Moses was no exception. We can feel for Moses with so many rebels to contend with. On one occasion when the people were thirsty, God's angel told Moses to speak to the rock and water would flow. [Numbers 20.8] Moses was angry with the people and said: *'Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?'* He then struck the rock twice with his rod. [Numbers 20.10,11] This rash act had far-reaching consequences for Moses, for in so doing he broke a powerful type. Jesus is represented by the rock as the Apostle Paul reminds us [1 Corinthians 10.4] and Jesus would only be smitten once and

not a second time. Through his death and resurrection the 'water of life' or salvation, would become freely available to all who demonstrate their faith in God, both Jews and Gentiles.

Moses came within sight of the promised land - but was not allowed to enter it and like all of us he was mortal. He died **in faith** and was buried by God's angel in a mountain within sight of his goal.

## THE FINAL OUTCOME

In summing up the life of Moses we have considered the meekness and humility of this man, who was reluctant to undertake so great a service. But having accepted this great work, he was faithful in discharging his responsibilities and unwearied in fulfilling them. He was vigilant in governing the people, resolute in correcting them. Despite their constant rebellion, he loved his people and was patient with them. He acted as their mediator, pleading with God on their behalf. These are some of the qualities of character which Moses displayed in his life - truly he was a man of faith in times of change.

So what lessons can we learn from our consideration of the life of Moses? The Apostle Paul tells us that *'whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.'* [Romans 15.4] Like all previous generations, we live in times of change. We believe that the greatest change in the history of this world will take place very soon. The Apostle Paul reminds us that Moses and others like him, looked with **the eye of faith** to the coming of Jesus the second time, to reward all God's faithful servants. The Scriptures teach us that Jesus will return to restore the kingdom of Israel, as heir to David's throne. He will rule the world in righteousness and bring lasting peace to this troubled planet. To share in that time to come, you must believe in the promises and like Moses, demonstrate **your faith in God** by being obedient to His requirements. Are you prepared to do this ?

Stanley Hughes  
Wombourne, West Midlands



THESE WORDS WERE used as a slogan by politicians during the last general election in the United Kingdom. We repeat them to emphasise the importance of education for all members of society. The way we are educated and the quality of our instruction can seriously affect our future, as those of us who are parents will realise.

The Bible tells us that there is nothing new in this process. The people of Israel were assembled together, to hear the words of God: *'...that they may learn to fear me...and that they may teach **their children.**'* [Deuteronomy 4.10 NKJV] We may want our children to get the best education available - to go on to university. Here is the most important form of education we could wish for our young people, or for all of us for that matter! *'Out of heaven he (God) let you hear his voice, that he might **instruct** you;...'* [Deuteronomy 4.36 NKJV]

The process of education takes place as one generation teaches the next generation. Israel were told to *'**teach** them to your children and your grandchildren.'* [Deuteronomy 4.9 NKJV] Even before Israel became a nation, God had seen in their ancestor Abraham, a natural teacher. *'For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment...'* [Genesis 18.19] The way of the world today is to teach and learn just about everything except the Word of God. The result, we believe, is clearly seen in the declining standards of behaviour in society. The Psalmist said that *'**The entrance of your words** gives light; It gives **understanding** to the simple.'* [Psalm 119.130 NKJV] The same man, David, asks more than once for God to educate him. *'**Teach** me your way, O LORD;...'* [Psalm 86.11 NKJV] He was **instructed**, he was given the **education** he desired - it comes out in words like this: *'you yourself have **taught** me. How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!'* [Psalm 119.102,103 NKJV]

Now this wonderful system of education is freely available to all - you don't need grants or loans - it is available in God's Word for the taking! We recommend that you study the Gospel records, that you absorb the words of Jesus, who went about **teaching** from these Holy Scriptures. The Apostle Paul also urged the first century believers to use these Scriptures - to read these wonderful books of the Bible *'For whatsoever things were written before were written for our **learning.**'* [Romans 15.4 NKJV]

God's process of education has its rewards too. It is not rewarded with degrees or certificates. God's method of education can lead us to be rewarded with eternal

life - if we act upon it - if we practice in our lives what we learn from God's Word. This is how Paul instructed his son in the faith Timothy *'But as for you, continue in the things which you have **learned**...you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.'* [2 Timothy 3.14,15 NKJV]

We urge you reader, to educate yourself in God's Word! *'Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your **own understanding**; In all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths.'* [Proverbs 3.5,6 NKJV]

Ken Dennis  
Dartford, Kent

## COVER PICTURE

THE MOST FAMOUS tomb of a Pharaoh to have remained more or less intact until recent times is that of the boy king Tutankhamun who was about nineteen years old when he died. The treasures found in his tomb included many artefacts made of gold of which the most famous was the golden face mask on the mummy of the dead Pharaoh. The cover picture shows some of the ornate gold work on one of the panels of Tutankhamun's golden throne which was also found in the tomb. It depicts Tutankhamun seated on the royal throne wearing an ornate triple crown with the queen anointing him.

According to the historians, Tutankhamun ruled Egypt in about 1300 BC only a few years before Rameses II, who was considered to be the Pharaoh of the Exodus which puts Tutankhamun contemporary with Moses. However this has recently been challenged by an Egyptologist who puts the date of the Exodus around 1450 BC. [see *'A Test of Time'* by David Rohl published by Century Limited, London]

Whichever date is correct, the treasures from the tomb of Tutankhamun testify to the greatness of ancient Egypt and confirm the accuracy of the Biblical record. The first article in this issue is about Moses, who was brought up in Pharaoh's court. However, as the article demonstrates, Moses was a man of faith and left this all behind. He obeyed God and fulfilled his mission, to deliver his people Israel from slavery in Egypt. We read in the New Testament that he chose *'...rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.'* [Hebrews 11.25,26 NKJV]

The example of Moses provides a great lesson for all who are seeking that reward. We must demonstrate our faith in God and make sacrifices in this life in order to follow God's way. Are you prepared to do this?



# Who Are The Angels?

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THE WRITER TO the Hebrews in the New Testament quotes from the Psalms when he speaks of God in relation to angels '*Who makes his angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire.*' [Psalm 104.4 NKJV]. Such a dramatic description of angels may not reflect our own experience in everyday life, but perhaps that is because we do not know who the angels are, or be aware of their existence.

## THE ANGELS ARE ELOHIM

We are introduced to the angels very early on in God's Word, in the work of creation itself. The work of God in relation to His creation is always carried out by His angels. The angels are a manifestation of His power, and are mighty spirit beings carrying out God's will. The word 'God' itself in the original Hebrew is often 'Elohim', which means 'mighty ones'. It was these 'Elohim'(angels) who carried out God's work in creation. The idea of many angels being involved in creation is shown in Genesis when the Elohim said '*Let **us** make man in our image, according to our likeness.*' [Genesis 1.26 NKJV]. God states that the '*sons of God shouted for joy*' at the creation [Job 38.7 NKJV]. In Psalm 8 the word 'Elohim' is translated 'angels'. '*For you have made him a little lower than the angels (Elohim).*' [Psalm 8.5 NKJV] This verse is quoted in the book of Hebrews to show that it was Jesus who was made '*a little lower than the angels.* [Hebrews 2.7] in status. Angels, then, are the 'mighty ones', who are a manifestation of God's spirit power.

## MESSENGERS - AGENTS

The original words for angels in both Hebrew (malak) and Greek (aggelos) have the meaning - messengers or agents. In the letter to the Hebrews, we learn a lot about the status and nature of the angels, because the Apostle Paul is arguing that Jesus, originally created on a lower status, has obtained through obedience, a superior position than the angels. But what is the work of the angels? Hebrews states '*Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister*

*for those who will inherit salvation?’ [Hebrews 1.14 NKJV]* God sends out angels to do His work, just as a fountain sends out shoots of water from a central source, or just like an optical fibre lamp sends out light along many tiny strands of glass, each gleaming with a spot of light at its tip.

Angels, then, are God’s messengers, His spirit agents, obeying implicitly the will of God, and acting on God’s behalf, *as God* in dealing with the affairs of this world. A special work of angels is to look after those who are called to know the Gospel, who have *believed* and have been *baptised* by immersion in water into the saving Name of Jesus Christ and who therefore have become *‘heirs of salvation.’* In Luke we read *‘there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.’* [Luke 15.10 NKJV] Again *‘The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear him.’* [Psalm 34.7 NKJV] The Psalms describe vividly the work of the angels in the words, *‘Bless the LORD you his angels, Who excel in strength, who do His word, Heeding the voice of his word. Bless the LORD, all you his hosts, You ministers of his, who do his pleasure.’* [Psalm 103.20-21 NKJV]

## SEEN AND UNSEEN (SPIRITS AND FLAMES OF FIRE)

Two aspects of the angels work can be seen in the description of angels as *‘spirits’* and secondly as *‘a flame of fire.’* Often the work of these invisible agents of the Almighty is unseen. We might view these works under the *Spirit* category. The prevention of an accident, the constant provision of food and all that is necessary to sustain us in our lives, the arrangement of personal circumstances and significant events which come under the category of divine providence in the lives of believers; all these are examples of the unseen work of angels in our lives. In relation to the nations and of Israel in particular we are shown in the book of Daniel and in the symbolic visions of the book of Revelation how angels control the outworking of God’s purpose. *‘...the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, Gives it to whomever he will, and sets over it the lowest of men.’* [Daniel 4.17 NKJV] He does this through the unseen influence of His angelic agents operating in the lives of men.

But not all angelic events are unseen. Some come under the *‘flame of fire’* category. There are many examples in scripture. Moses witnessed an angel who appeared to him in a *‘flame of fire’* out of the middle of a bush, when he was first



called by God to save His people from Egyptian slavery. [Exodus 3.2] Take for example, the Law given to Moses by the mouth of angels on Mount Sinai. Angelic glory was reflected in the face of Moses when he descended from the mount. The mountain itself was quaking and there was thunder, lightning, fire and smoke, '*because the LORD descended upon it in fire.*' [Exodus 19.18 NKJV] Such was the visible power of God manifested in His agents at that time.

Two angels appeared to Lot and his family and guided them out of Sodom just before the city was destroyed by the fire of God's judgement. [Genesis 19.1-22] We should not forget that the Almighty controls the natural elements to fulfil His will even in punishment when necessary. '*...I make peace and create calamity.*' [Isaiah 45.7 NKJV] We should note in passing that God does not create **sin**, though He has made sorrow and wretchedness to be the sure fruits of sin.

Israel in the wilderness were led by a pillar of fire to guide them and this was the manifestation of God's guiding angel. The chief of the invisible angelic host who looked after Israel, was later visibly made known to Joshua at Jericho, as a man with a sword drawn in his hand. He was the captain of the Lord's host. [Joshua 5.13]

Another example is where an angel appeared to Samson's parents before his birth and then ascended in the flame of the altar as an offering was made! [Judges 13.3-21] Yes, God's ministers have been revealed as '*a flame of fire!*'

## APPEARING AS MEN

It is interesting to note that when angels appear to men they are often not recognised as angels, unless of course, the angel announces his divine message as Gabriel did to Mary, Jesus' mother. [Luke 1.26-38] This is because they appear as ordinary men. Not surprising, since man was created in **their** image! Thus when Abraham entertained three men as recorded in Genesis 18 he was unaware that they were angels, though from the message that they carried, it is obvious that they were messengers from God. They carried the news that Sarah, Abraham's wife, was to bear a child in her old age. The child was to be the ancestor of the '*seed*' that Abraham had been promised years before and for which he patiently waited in faith. That seed was none other than Jesus Christ!

Jacob wrestled with a man, a messenger who was in fact an angel. He said 'I

*have seen God (Elohim) face to face, and my life is preserved.'* [Genesis 32.30 NKJV] The angels who appeared to the disciples on the occasion of Jesus' ascension into heaven are described as '*men in white apparel.*' [Acts 1.10]

From the above examples there is actually no justification from Scripture for the traditional picture of an angel with two large wings! There are, however, examples of dramatic and unmistakable appearances, such as the angel who descended from heaven and rolled away the stone from Christ's tomb. [Matthew 28.2,3] His countenance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow. The shepherds on the hills witnessed a '*multitude of the heavenly host*', announcing the birth of Jesus - that must have been an awesome sight. [Luke 2.13,14]

### FUNDAMENTAL TO GOD'S PURPOSE

The angels are fundamental to the outworking of God's purpose as can be seen from the following statements:

- \* They gave the promises to Abraham of a '*seed*' that should come - that descendant or seed is Christ, the Saviour of all those who believe.  
[Genesis 13.15; Galatians 3.16]
- \* They gave the Law to Moses. (The word spoken through angels which foreshadowed Christ). [Hebrews 2.2]
- \* They announced Christ's birth, both to Mary and to the shepherds.  
[Luke 1.30-35; 2.8-14]
- \* They rolled away the stone from the tomb at Christ's resurrection.  
[Matthew 28.1-7]
- \* They announced his future return to the earth. [Acts 1.11]
- \* They will accompany Jesus at his return. [2 Thessalonians 1.7]

### RULERSHIP OF THIS WORLD, NOT THE KINGDOM TO COME

The angels carry out God's work in rulership of the nations and events of this world, leading to Christ's return and the establishment of God's kingdom. They occupy an exalted position, they are immortal (do not die) and they are filled with



God's spirit, being a direct manifestation or revealing of His power. Despite this, we are told that Jesus inherited a '*more excellent name*' than the angels, because he suffered on the cross in order to destroy the power of sin. God has exalted Jesus to sit down '*at the right hand side of the Majesty on high*' [Hebrews 1.3 NKJV] which is where he is now.

Followers of Jesus are those who accept his sacrifice as the only means of acceptable approach to God, and who become saints (called out ones), through baptism into his name. These disciples, his brother and sisters, are related to the exalted reward which Christ has received. They are related to the promises made to Abraham, which make them '*heirs of the world.*' [Romans 4.13] that is a place of immortal rulership with Christ in his coming kingdom. The writer to the Hebrews states that it is **not** angels who will inherit God's glorious kingdom, or rule it, in the words: '*For he has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels.*' [Hebrews 2.5 NKJV] This is because Christ and his saints who have accepted him now, will rule together. Daniel the prophet says '*But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.*' [Daniel 7.18 NKJV]

### IMMORTAL AND SINLESS

The nature of angels is promised to those who accept Christ. Today men and women are mortal, dying creatures because of sin. After Christ's return, there will be a resurrection of the '*just and unjust.*' They, together with the living who are responsible to Christ will be judged and rewarded according to their works. [Revelation 20.12] Those found worthy of life will, in God's mercy, then attain to that state described by Jesus: '*But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; nor can they die any more, for they **are equal to the angels** and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.*' [Luke 20.35,36 NKJV] May Jesus soon come, and may it be the happy lot of each of us to be rewarded as children of God, then to share the wonderful privileges now enjoyed by the angels of God.

Justin Giles  
Sidcup, Kent

# Bible Truths

## The Seal of Jeroboam

THE PICTURE OF the seal shown with this article (see page 24), carries the inscription 'Belonging to Shema, servant of Jeroboam'. The seal was found in archaeological excavations at Megiddo in Northern Israel during the Turkish occupation of the land. The original seal is carved in jasper, while the picture is of a bronze cast taken from it. But the striking feature of the seal is the roaring lion that was used as a symbol for the southern kingdom of Judah.

The seal belonged to Shema a servant of Jeroboam. Now most biblical scholars accept that this refers to king Jeroboam II of whom we read: *'In the fifteenth year of Amaziah son of Joash king of Judah, Jeroboam son of Jehoash king of Israel became king in Samaria, and he reigned for forty-one years.'* [2 Kings 14.23 NIV]

But, what was the servant of a king of Israel doing with the royal symbol of the rival kingdom of Judah? We believe the explanation could be that there had previously been war between kings Jehoash and Amaziah, for the Bible tells us: *'Judah was routed by Israel...Jehoash...captured Amaziah king of Judah...Jehoash went to Jerusalem...He took all the gold and silver and all the articles found in the temple of the LORD...He also took hostages and returned to Samaria.'* [2 Kings 14.12-14 NIV]

Jeroboam has been acknowledged as a powerful ruler who put into effect building projects throughout the land. The archaeologist, professor Yadin, has said of the buildings uncovered at Hazor and attributed to Jeroboam, that they are 'among the finest of the entire Israelite period.' But the biblical record also tells us that he took back a lot of territory lost to previous invaders. We read: *'He was the one who restored the boundaries of Israel from Lebo Hamath (Northern Syria) to the Sea of the Arabah,...(Dead Sea)'* [2 Kings 14.25 NIV]

These conquests were the outcome of a prophecy from God through Jonah. But this same record tells us *'As for the other events of Jeroboam's reign, all he did, and his military achievements, including how he recovered for Israel*

*Continued on Page 24*

# Books of the Bible

## - Haggai

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LOOKING BACK FROM where the prophet Haggai stood (in Jerusalem around 520 BC), things had not gone at all well for his people. The original twelve tribes of Israel were now depleted to just two and a half tribes known collectively as Judah (from which the word *Jew* is derived). The other tribes had been conquered and scattered two hundred years before by the Assyrians. Haggai could reflect woefully that only eighty-five years earlier, Jerusalem had been invaded by the Babylonians, God's temple destroyed, and the people of Judah taken to Babylon as captives. God's people had been paying a heavy price for neglecting Him – as indeed He promised they would. [Deuteronomy 28.47]

But God never forgets His chosen people. [Jeremiah 30.11] He punishes only to instruct: whether it be the punishment of the fool for the instruction of the wise, [Proverbs 21.11] or the punishment of the temporarily wayward for his or her own instruction. [Proverbs 9.8] **This latter form of punishment is the dominant theme of Haggai's prophecy.**

### 'IN THE SECOND YEAR OF DARIUS THE KING'

Haggai began writing the book that bears his name '*In the second year of Darius the king....*' [Haggai 1.1] He never actually mentions that he is in Jerusalem. We could guess as much from the references to the rebuilding of the temple of God, which was at Jerusalem, but we don't have to guess because another book of the Bible tells us. Ezra, writing of the same events tells us:

'Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them.' [Ezra 5.1]

Seventy years after the Babylonians **first** invasion of Jerusalem (there were two: the temple was destroyed in the **second**), and the first captives were taken, God intervened. He intervened first of all by allowing the Babylonian empire to be overthrown by the Medo-Persians [Daniel 5.28] and secondly by causing a man



called Cyrus to head the new empire. [Isaiah 44.28] Cyrus was sympathetic towards the Jews, as God promised he would be. He was in fact 'charged' by God 'to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.' [Ezra 1.1] This meant that the people of Judah were free to go back and rebuild the temple. A good number of them 'whose spirit God had raised' went home to start the work. [Ezra 1.5] God had encouraged them all and lifted their spirits, with Cyrus's favour.

But things didn't progress smoothly. Cyrus died not long after the Jews returned to Jerusalem. His son left them alone but he was later dethroned by a usurper called Artaxerxes. This pretender was more interested in getting along with Judah's neighbours than in honouring any agreement made with Judah. Much like today, the nations around the Jews were unhappy at their revival. They persuaded Artaxerxes to command the Jews to stop all work on the temple. Let's pick up the story as told in the book of Ezra:

'Now when the copy of king Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum, and Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, [a 'rogues gallery' of neighbours hostile to the Jews] they went up in haste to Jerusalem unto the Jews, and made them to cease by force and power. Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.' [Ezra 4.23,24]

That last phrase '*the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia*' is almost identical to the first phrase of Haggai's prophecy, and Ezra continues, as we've seen already, by saying that '*then*' the prophets Haggai and Zechariah prophesied to the Jews in Jerusalem. [Ezra 5.1]

## AN OLD TESTAMENT PAUL AND TIMOTHY

And so the scene was set. Judah had been back in the land of Israel for about fifteen years and still the temple of the Lord was unfinished. The people needed stirring into action. Haggai and Zechariah were the prophets inspired for the task. Interestingly God chose an older man (Haggai) and a young man (Zechariah) to work together. Haggai wrote as one who had seen the original temple in its glory [Haggai 2.3] and therefore could relate to those who remembered the original building and were dismayed at how 'inferior' the projected replacement was by comparison. Zechariah must have been a younger man because his father returned with him from captivity. [Nehemiah 12.4] This was a useful combination

of old and young working together to appeal to all the people. It brings to mind the example of Paul and Timothy in New Testament times.

## THE FOUR MESSAGES OF HAGGAI

Haggai's prophecy divides into four distinct messages, given over the space of only four months, all in that same '*second year of Darius the king.*'

First message	Chapter 1 verses 1-15	'in the sixth month'
Second message	Chapter 2 verses 1-9	'in the seventh month'
Third/fourth messages	Chapter 2 verses 10-23	'in the ninth month'

## THE FIRST MESSAGE

**The first message was to stir the people into action.** This was achieved by explaining to the people why they were having such a difficult time. They had become discouraged by setbacks: the attitude of their neighbours and of course the new ruler, Artaxerxes. So they had stopped work for some time out of fear. With little else to occupy them, they turned their attention to building and decorating their own houses. They justified themselves by saying, '*The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built.*' [Haggai 1.2] They felt that if they were prevented from proceeding then it must be God's will that they *didn't* proceed. It's a circular form of logic that can be very enticing. They thought they had a *cast iron* case because the prophet Jeremiah had foretold that the Jews' captivity in Babylon would last seventy years. [Jeremiah 25.11,12; 29.10] They must have reasoned it through like this.

**Fact 1:** The decree by Cyrus that a new temple should be built was made seventy years after the Babylonians **first** invasion of Jerusalem.

**Fact 2:** The temple was destroyed and most of the remainder of the Jews taken into captivity some fifteen years later during the **second** invasion.

**Therefore:** The seventy years of captivity didn't actually start until fifteen years later.

**Therefore:** They had arrived back in Jerusalem a little prematurely and needn't trouble themselves unduly about not getting on with the building of the temple.

So '*the time was not yet.*' But that excuse was now '*past it's use-by date!*' Haggai was giving his first message eighty-five years after the **first** invasion.

Seventy years was up from whichever invasion they cared to date it.

But what about Artaxerxes' decree that all work on the temple must stop? Dare they ignore that? He was a powerful and ruthless monarch. You will have noticed that Artaxerxes was no longer in charge of the empire: this is now in the second year of Darius the king, a man of considerably more integrity than the usurper Artaxerxes.

When Haggai began his first message the temple of the Lord still lay waste and the people were living in the houses they had devoted themselves to building. [Haggai 1.4] But, comfortable as they should have been in their pleasant houses, things were not going well for them. Food was short because harvests were poor and money was scarce. Their clothes were worn out and in need of replacement. [Haggai 1.6] Now, they should have been wondering why. Not in the abstract or rhetorical way that people often ask '*why is this happening to me?*' when things take a turn for the worse. As the chosen people of the One who promised blessings when they did well and punishments when they did badly, they should have realised why it was happening to them. '*Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.*' [Haggai 1.7]

Haggai, the Lord's messenger, told them that they were creating their own problems. Their hunger and poverty was a direct result of their neglect of God. [Haggai 1.8-11] Didn't they remember the lessons of their own history? It is well said that those who don't take account of history are doomed to repeat it. But Haggai's words found their mark. The penny dropped, as we might say. Twenty four days later, having no doubt discussed the matter among themselves with much consternation, '*they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts, their God.*' [Haggai 1.14]

## THE SECOND MESSAGE

Chapter two begins with Haggai's second message. We have now moved on to '*the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month.*' [Haggai 2.1] **This time the message is of encouragement.** The people had begun the work they had returned to Jerusalem to do. But some of the people were dispirited by the appearance of the new temple. There were those like Haggai himself, who could remember how the original temple had looked before the Babylonians destroyed it. It was quite obvious to them that this new temple was going to be nowhere near as grand. How helpful it must have been to have Haggai take the



Lord's encouragement to these people. They might have dismissed the younger man, Zechariah, saying, 'What do you know of such things?' But Haggai was one like themselves who would know what they meant.

Haggai was told particularly to encourage Zerubbabel, the governor (a distant relative of Jesus himself, incidentally) [Matthew 1.12,13] and Joshua the high priest. The leaders of the people needed to be reassured as much as the people themselves that God was now with them. [Haggai 2.2] The encouragement was to look beyond small things. There were bigger issues at stake here. It was not only the building of a temple that was going on but the building of characters acceptable to God. This is always an issue for believers. However small the tasks in hand may appear they can all contribute to the forging of characters fit for the kingdom of God. So there's nothing really small about them. This was true for the people of God in 520 BC, and it holds true for believers today.



*An artist's impression of Solomon's Temple*

## ANOTHER TEMPLE

A little confusingly, verses six to nine of chapter two are *not* about the temple they were building in 520 BC. This is where Haggai's message turns into what we expect from a prophet – a vision of the future. Haggai foretold that a time was

coming when all the nations of the earth would receive a divine 'shake up'. When this happens the glory of the Lord will fill the temple, and the temple will be greater than the former building. Clearly none of this can relate to the temple under construction in Haggai's day: it was certainly not greater than the former temple. There is no record of the dazzling brilliance of the glory of God ever filling it and God did not intervene dramatically in the affairs of all nations while it stood.

Haggai was talking about a temple *yet* to be built, which *will* be filled with God's glory, *after* God shakes the nations. In the letter to the Hebrews there is an explanation of this shaking of the nations. It '*signifieth the removing of those things which are shaken*' (the kingdoms of men) and '*receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved.*' (the kingdom of God) [*Hebrews 12.25-29*] The Bible tells us that a new and glorious temple is to be built at Jerusalem when the kingdom of God is established. [*Ezekiel chapters 40-47*]

The final words of Haggai's second message are '*and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.*' [*Haggai 2.9*] The name Jerusalem is itself a prophecy, for it means '*she shall have peace.*' (You may recognize the last two syllables as a variation of *shalom*, the Jewish greeting, meaning peace.) When the kingdom of God is established – when '*The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ*' [*Revelation 11.15*] – then God will give her peace.

This was great encouragement for the people of Judah. They were encouraged not to look back at the great things of the past and lament the small things of the present, but to look forward to the even greater things of the future. Even Solomon's temple will be considered as nothing compared with the final temple to be built on the mount at Jerusalem!

### THE THIRD MESSAGE

Haggai's third and forth messages were both given on the '*four and twentieth day of the ninth month.*' [*Haggai 2.10,20*] **The third message carries the promise of a blessing.** Haggai poses two questions to the priests. First he asks them whether ordinary food is made holy by touching holy food (holy food being the flesh of sacrificed animals that the priests were allowed to eat). The answer is of course, no! Then he asks whether any one is made unclean by touching a dead body. The priests have to answer, yes! According to the laws of God, such contact would render someone ceremonially unclean.

The points being made were that people are not made holy simply because they are in contact with holy things, and that when people are spiritually dead they contaminate what they touch. The people of Judah should not imagine themselves holy just because they were engaged in building a holy temple. It didn't rub off! It was their attitude to God (and His to them, of course) that made them a holy people. But on the other hand, their uncleanness, their deadness as a spiritual body of people, did pollute what they did. Their harvests failed and they became poor. [Haggai 1.6] But now, following their change of heart, God said He would bless their harvests and bring back their prosperity. [Haggai 2.19]

#### THE FOURTH MESSAGE

**The final message is of hope.** Again the prophet returns to the subject of God shaking the nations. But this time his message is directed especially to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah. Had Judah not been subject to Medo-Persian rulership, no doubt Zerubbabel would have been king. He was a descendant of King David and, as we noted earlier, was in the line of descent that led to Jesus. But God had already said that because the kings of Israel had proved to be mostly such a disappointment there were to be no more until Jesus appeared. [Ezekiel 21.26,27] But Zerubbabel was one of those special people chosen to represent Christ. By that I mean that there were aspects of his life and work which were similar to those of Christ. His name means *seed of Babylon*, indicating that he was born in Babylon. (Incidentally the Hebrew word Zera means seed, and from that we have zero, which is printed as 0, which is the hieroglyph, or word picture, in ancient writings for a seed.) As someone born in the royal line of David and who supervised the building of a new temple at Jerusalem, Zerubbabel clearly had some similarities with Christ who will oversee the building of the new temple in the kingdom of God. There are a number of people like this in Scripture. David was one of them. They are known as 'types of Christ', and the study of their lives can give us an insight into the life and work of Christ.

In the final verse of Haggai's prophecy, he is obviously referring to Christ, the future 'Zerubbabel'; not the man who was his contemporary, but one who was yet to come and rule over Jerusalem when God overthrows '*the throne of kingdoms*,' and destroys '*the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen*.' (the nations) [Haggai 2.22] God says He will make this Zerubbabel '*as a signet*.' [Haggai 2.23] A signet was the seal (or embossed ring) with which a king stamped his authority on his commands – the sort of thing that Cyrus would have used on his decree that the Jews should go and build the temple and that



Artaxerxes would have used on his letter commanding them to stop. God says therefore, that in the day when His son comes back to Jerusalem to build a marvellous new temple, *he* will be God's living authority to do whatever he will. The consent or refusal of mere human rulers will be irrelevant in the face of the powerful presence of Christ fulfilling his Father's will and purpose.

That was true in part for Haggai's Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel (interestingly his *legal guardian*, but probably not his *natural father* [1 Chronicles 3.18,19]: another link with Jesus the 'son' of Joseph), but it will be *overwhelmingly* true for the 'Zerubbabel' to come. That was the hope that was offered to comfort Haggai and his fellow believers. The same hope is offered to comfort all believers. **In fact, if you need stirring up, encouraging, blessing or hope, then Haggai has a message for you.**

Colin Attridge  
Carshalton, Surrey

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## BIBLE TRUTHS *Continued from Page 16*

*both Damascus and Hamath, which had belonged to Yaudi (Judah), are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel?' [2 Kings 14.28 NIV]*

The conquest of Judah and the carrying to Samaria of the contents of the Jerusalem temple, along with the recovery of large tracts of Judaeon land, would have made Jeroboam feel that he was entitled to exercise his power over the southern kingdom and use its symbol on a seal as his own. This is another amazing way in which an archaeological find not only confirms the accuracy of God's Word, but also how a little further study of the scriptural record gives us the answer to what appears to be a difficulty.



Ken Dennis  
Dartford, Kent

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